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THE AMERICAN HERITAGE
DICTIONARY
OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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THE AMERICAN HERITAGE **ONARY** OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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variable cost | vary

aberrant. 3. *Mathematics.* Having no fixed quantitative value. —*n. Abbr. var.* 1. Anything that varies or is prone to variation. 2. *Astronomy.* A variable star. 3. *Mathematics.* a. A quantity capable of assuming any of a set of values. b. A symbol representing such a quantity. —*var'i-a-bil'i-ty, var'i-a-bil'ness n.*

—*var'i-a-bly adv.*

variable cost. Cost that fluctuates directly with output changes.

variable star. A star whose brightness varies because of internal changes or periodic eclipsing of component stars.

Var-i-en (vär'ē-ən), **Russell Harrison**, 1898–1959. American physicist; with his brother, Sigurd (1901–1961), invented the klystron.

vari-ance (vär'ē-əns) *n.* 1. a. The act of varying. b. The state or quality of being variant or variable; variation; difference. c. A difference between what is expected and what actually occurs. 2. A difference of opinion; dissension; a dispute. 3. *Law.* a. A discrepancy between two statements or documents in a legal proceeding. b. The license to engage in an act contrary to a usual rule. 4. *Statistics.* The mean of the squares of the variations from the mean of a frequency distribution. 5. *Chemistry.* The number of thermodynamic variables required to specify a state of equilibrium of a system, given by the phase rule. —See Synonyms at discord. —*at variance.* 1. In a state of discrepancy; differing; conflicting. Said of things: *The facts are at variance.* 2. In a state of discord or dissension; quarreling. Said of persons: *Two factions of the party are at variance.*

vari-ant (vär'ē-ənt) *adj. Abbr. var.* 1. Having or exhibiting variation; differing. 2. Tending or liable to vary; variable; changeable. 3. Deviating from a standard; exhibiting slight difference. —*n.* Something that differs only slightly from another in form, as a different spelling or pronunciation of the same word. [Middle English, from Old French, from Latin *variāns*, present participle of *variāre*, *VARY*.]

vari-ate (vär'ē-it, -āt') *n.* 1. Something that varies; a variable. 2. *Statistics.* A random variable with a numerical value that is defined on a given sample space. [From Latin *variāre*, *VARY*.]

vari-a-tion (vär'ē-ā-shən) *n. Abbr. var.* 1. a. The act, process, or result of varying; change or deviation. b. The state or fact of being varied. 2. The extent or degree of such deviation: *a variation of ten pounds in weight.* 3. A natural compass error, magnetic declination (*see*). 4. Something that is slightly different from another of the same type. 5. *Biology.* Marked difference or deviation from characteristic form, function, or structure. 6. *Mathematics.* A function that relates the values of one variable to those of other variables. 7. a. A musical form that is an altered version of some given theme, diverging from it by melodic ornamentation and by changes in harmony, rhythm, or key. b. One of a series of such forms based on a single theme. 8. *Ballet.* A solo dance, especially one forming part of a larger work. —See Synonyms at difference. —*vari-a-tion-el* *adj.*

vari-i-cal-la (vär'ē-sél'a) *n.* Chicken pox (*see*). [New Latin, irregular diminutive of *VARIOLA*.] —*vari-i-cal'loid* *adj.*

vari-ces. Plural of varix.

varico-, varic- Indicates varix or varicose veins; for example, varicocle, varicosis. [From Latin *varix* (stem *varic-*), *VARY*.]

vari-i-co-cle (vär'ē-kō-sél') *n.* A varicose condition of veins of the spermatic cord or the ovaries, forming a soft tumor. [*VARICO-* + *CELE* (tumor).]

vari-i-col-ored (vär'ē-kül'ord) *adj.* Having a variety of colors; variegated; motley.

vari-cope (vär'ē-kōp) *n. pl. -ties.* 1. Varicosity. 2. a. A varicose distention or swelling. b. The state of having varicose veins.

vari-i-cot-o-my (vär'ē-köt'ō-mē) *n. pl. -mies.* Subcutaneous incision to cure varicose veins. [*VARICO-* + *-TOMY*.]

vari-led (vär'ēd) *adj.* 1. Having various kinds or forms; marked by variety. 2. Modified or altered. 3. Varicolored; variegated.

—See Synonyms at miscellaneous. —*vari-led-ty* *adv.*

vari-ed thrush. A bird, *Ixoreus naevius*, of western North America, resembling the robin but having a black transverse stripe on the breast.

vari-e-gate (vär'ē-gät') *tr. v. -gated, -gating, -gates.* 1. To change the appearance of, especially by marking with different colors; to streak. 2. To give variety to; make varied. [Late Latin *variegare*, from Latin *varius*, *VARIOUS*.]

vari-e-gat-ed (vär'ē-gät'id) *adj.* 1. Having streaks, marks, or patches of a different color or colors. 2. Distinguished or characterized by variety; diversified.

vari-e-ga-tion (vär'ē-gä'shən) *n.* The state of being variegated; diversified coloration.

vari-e-tal (vär'ē-täl') *adj.* Of, indicating, or named for a biological variety. [From *VARIETY*.] —*vari-e-tal-ly* *adv.*

vari-e-té (vär'ē-té), *n. pl. -ties. Abbr. var.* 1. The condition or quality of being various or varied; a lack of monotony; diversity. 2. A number or collection of varied things, especially of a particular group; an assortment: *"Here are also a great variety of birds throughout the seasons, inhabiting both sea and land"* (William Bartram). 3. A different kind, sort, or form of something of the same general classification. 4. *Biology.* a. A taxonomic category forming a subdivision of a species and consisting of naturally occurring or selectively bred individuals

having varying characteristics. b. An organism, especially a plant, belonging to such a category. [Old French *variete*, from Latin *varietas*, from *varius*, *VARIOUS*.]

variety meat. Meat taken from a part other than skeletal muscles, as liver or sweetbreads, or processed, as sausage.

variety show. A theatrical entertainment consisting of successive unrelated acts, such as songs, dances, and comedy skits.

variety store. A retail store carrying a large variety of usually low-cost merchandise. Also called "variety shop."

vari-i-form (vär'ē-förm') *adj.* Having a variety of forms; diversiform. [VARI(O) + -FORM.]

vari-o-, vari- Indicates variety or difference; for example, variometer, variform. [From Latin *varius*, *VARIOUS*.]

vari-ri-o-la (vär'ē-rē-lə) *n.* Smallpox. [New Latin, from Medieval Latin, pustule, from Latin *varius*, speckled, *VARIOUS*.]

vari-i-o-late (vär'ē-ə-lāt', -lēt') *adj.* Having pustules or marks like those of smallpox. —*tr. v. variolated, -ating, -lates.* To inoculate with smallpox.

vari-i-o-lite (vär'ē-ə-lit') *n.* A basic rock with a pock-marked appearance due to numerous white, rounded spherules embedded in it. [Medieval Latin *variolata*, smallpox, *VARIOLA* + -ITE.]

vari-i-o-loid (vär'ē-ə-loid') *n.* A mild form of smallpox in persons who have previously been vaccinated or who have previously had the disease. [VARIOL(A) + -OID.]

vari-i-om-e-tor (vär'ē-əmē-tər) *n.* A variable inductor used to measure variations in terrestrial magnetism. [VARIO- + -METER.]

vari-i-om-um (vär'ē-ərəm, -ərəm) *n.* 1. An edition particularly of the complete works of a classical author, with notes by various scholars or editors. 2. An edition containing various versions of a text. —*adj.* Designating or pertaining to such an edition or text. [Short for Latin *editio cum notis variorum*, edition with the notes of various (commentators), from *variorum*, genitive plural of *varius*, *VARIOUS*.]

vari-i-ous (vär'ē-əs) *adj. Abbr. var.* 1. a. Of diverse kinds. b. Unlike; different. 2. More than one; numerous; several. 3. Many-sided; varying; versatile. 4. Having a variegated nature or appearance. 5. Being one of a class or group; individual and separate: *The various reports all agreed.* 6. *Archaic.* Changeable; variable. [Latin *varius*, speckled, variegated, changeable. See wā-' in Appendix.*] —*vari-i-ously* *adv.* —*vari-i-ous-ness n.*

Usage: *Various* sometimes appears as a plural collective pronoun followed by *of* rather than by a noun, but the usage is widely condemned: *He spoke to various of the members* (or *spoke to various of them*). The preceding example is termed unacceptable by 91 per cent of the Usage Panel. *Various* has its proper function as an adjective in *He spoke to various members*.

vari-sized (vär'ē-siz'd) *adj.* Of different sizes.

vari-type (vär'ē-typ') *n.* A trademark for a typewriter used to prepare copy in a variety of type styles.

vari-ix (vär'iks) *n. pl. -ices (-əséz').* 1. A vein, artery, or lymph vessel that is abnormally dilated and twisted. 2. One of the longitudinal ridges marking a resting stage in the development of the lip of a gastropod shell. [Latin, swollen vein. See wā-' in Appendix.*]

vari-let (vär'lit) *n. Archaic.* 1. An attendant or servant. 2. A knight's page. 3. A rascal; knave. [Middle English, from Old French, variant of *vastel*, *valeit*, VALET.]

vari-let-ry (vär'lit-rē) *n. Archaic.* A crowd of attendants or menials, especially when disorderly; the rabble.

vari-mir (vär'mir) *n. Regional.* A person or animal considered undesirable, obnoxious, or troublesome. [Variant of VERMIN.]

Var-na (vär'nə). Formerly *Stat-sin* (stă'sin). A city of eastern Bulgaria, a port on the Black Sea. Population, 201,000.

vari-nish (vär'nish) *n.* 1. An oil-based paint containing a solvent and an oxidizing or an evaporating binder, used to coat a surface with a hard, glossy, thin film. 2. a. The smooth coating or gloss resulting from the application of varnish. b. Something resembling or likened to varnish. 3. Any deceptively attractive external appearance; an outward show. —*tr. v. varnished, -nishing, -nishes.* 1. To cover with varnish. 2. To give a smooth and glossy finish to. 3. To give a deceptively nice appearance to; gloss over. [Middle English *vernisch*, from Old French *verniss*, from Medieval Latin *veronix*, sandarac, from Medieval Greek *berenikē*, perhaps from Greek *Berenikē*, Berenice, city in Cyrenaica, Libya, where varnishes were first used.]

vari-nish-er *n.*

varnish tree. Any of several trees having milky juice used to make varnish.

Var-ro (vär'ō), **Marcus Terentius**, 116–27 B.C. Roman scholar and encyclopedist.

vari-sit-y (vär'ē-tē) *n. pl. -ties.* 1. The principal team representing a university, college, or school in sports or other competitions. 2. *Chiefly British Informal.* A university. [Shortened and altered from UNIVERSITY.] —*vari-sit-y* *adj.*

Var-u-ru (vär'ō-nə, vür'-). *Hinduism.* The Vedic god of the skies and seas. [Sanskrit *Varuna*. See wē-' in Appendix.*]

var-us (vär'as) *n. pl. -uses.* An abnormal positioning of a bone of the leg or foot. [From Latin *värus*, crooked, bent inward. See wā-' in Appendix.*]

varve (värv) *n. Geology.* 1. A layer of sediment deposited in one year. 2. A pair of distinct layers of sediment, indicating sea-sonal deposits. [Swedish *varv*, layer, turn, from *vara*, to bend, turn, from Old Norse *hverfa*. See kwerp- in Appendix.*]

var-y (vär') *v. -ied, -ying, -ies. -tr.* 1. To make or cause changes in characteristics or attributes; modify or alter. 2. To make varied; give variety to: *"Using the preceding recipe, you may vary the sauce in a number of ways"* (Julia Child). 3. To introduce under new aspects; express in a different manner.